

Incivility and violence against urban bus drivers in Australia

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ISSA Symposium

Incivility and Violence Against Urban Bus Drivers in Australia

17 September 2015

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OUTLINE

- Context to the study
- Research grant project
- Case study with multiple methodologies
- Correlational factors – role of the bus driver
- Examples of abuse – CCTV footage
- Main findings
- Recommendations
- Future actions





CONTEXT



- Some examination of crime on public transport in the UK and USA (Burrell 2007, Newton 2004, Loukaitou-Sideris 1999) but no studies of bus driver violence in Australia (cf taxis and trains); yet the literature suggests that the majority of transit-related offending occurs on buses.
- Internationally, those working in the transport sector are more than twice as likely to be assaulted and nearly four times as likely to be threatened, ranking higher than workers in security, protective services and social support fields (Budd 2001).
- Overall victimisation rates are said to be low but this is based on limited reporting and little knowledge about the levels of aggression and patterning of offences. It is suggested that less than ten percent of assaults on drivers are reported in any official capacity.

RESEARCH GRANT PROJECT



- Systematic literature review and consultations → scoping paper and presentation to industry and government → federal funding for year long study from Researchers in Business scheme which is part of Federal Government's Enterprise Connect program.
- The focus was on the nature and extent of on-board aggression, its antecedents and consequences, and in assessing crime prevention techniques relating to violence toward urban bus drivers in Southeast Queensland.
- Project commenced on 21 February 2013 and (with short extension) the data collection and preliminary analysis was completed in late May 2014.

INDUSTRY PARTNERS



Violence Against Bus Drivers



“Violence to staff at work from members of the public is at an unacceptable level... No one should have to accept verbal or physical abuse as part of their job.”

Bill Callaghan (Chair, Health & Safety Commission, UK)
2000.

Background

International literature and compensation claim data indicates violence and threats to bus drivers is a major problem. Antisocial behaviour and criminal conduct are inextricably linked, while media renditions of violence against bus drivers highlights their complex and challenging work environment.

Australia has a research deficit in this area. Funded by the government initiative Researchers in Business (Enterprise Connect) and industry stakeholders, this study aims to inform crime reduction techniques and strategies.

Stakeholders



Transit Australia Group



Project Aims

- Shed light on the SEQ situation
- Understand the issues
- Ultimate goal - reduce incidents of aggression against bus drivers
- Inform a national research endeavour

Research Study Components

Focus groups

Industry interviews / surveys

Evaluation and analysis of incident reports and CCTV footage

Observational data collection on buses



“In times of shrinking budgets and increasing Federal and State deficits, policy makers and practitioners must make efficient use of prevention resources by opting for programs that have the greatest likelihood of producing positive effects.”

Kylee Bumbarer and Greenberg, 2005.

Pilot Study Methodology

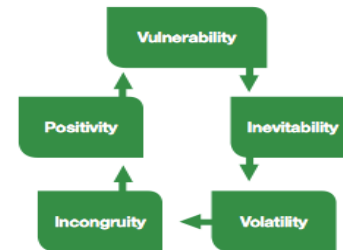
Bus driver focus groups to examine:

- Nature of aggression
- Antecedents and causes
- Existing protective structures

Types Of Abuse Against Drivers

- Physical and verbal abuse
- Incivility
- Road rage
- Property damage

Preliminary Results



Prevention Perspectives On Cause Of Incivility And Abuse

1. Reduced effort required to offend
2. Low risks of offending
3. Rewards ie cash and belongings
4. Provocations
5. Excuses for offending

Outcome

Smart-device tools developed to capture incidents of violence against bus drivers.

Investigators: Yolande Huntingdon (PhD candidate) and Assistant Professor Robyn Lincoln (HSS).



METHODOLOGIES

Adopted an ethnographic case study design with a multi-method approach:

1. Focus groups with local bus drivers as the first stage
2. Observations on a key 24-hour route using the specially developed mobile-web tool
3. Survey of drivers regarding victimisation and opinions about precipitating factors and prevention initiatives
4. Analyses of CCTV footage of selected on-board events – first time such event-level data have been investigated
5. Examination of officially reported incident data over a three year period
6. Breakdown of policing information via an RTI application
7. Informal discussions with industry partners and formal interviews with key stakeholders

MOBILE-WEB TOOL

Bus Incident Reporting System

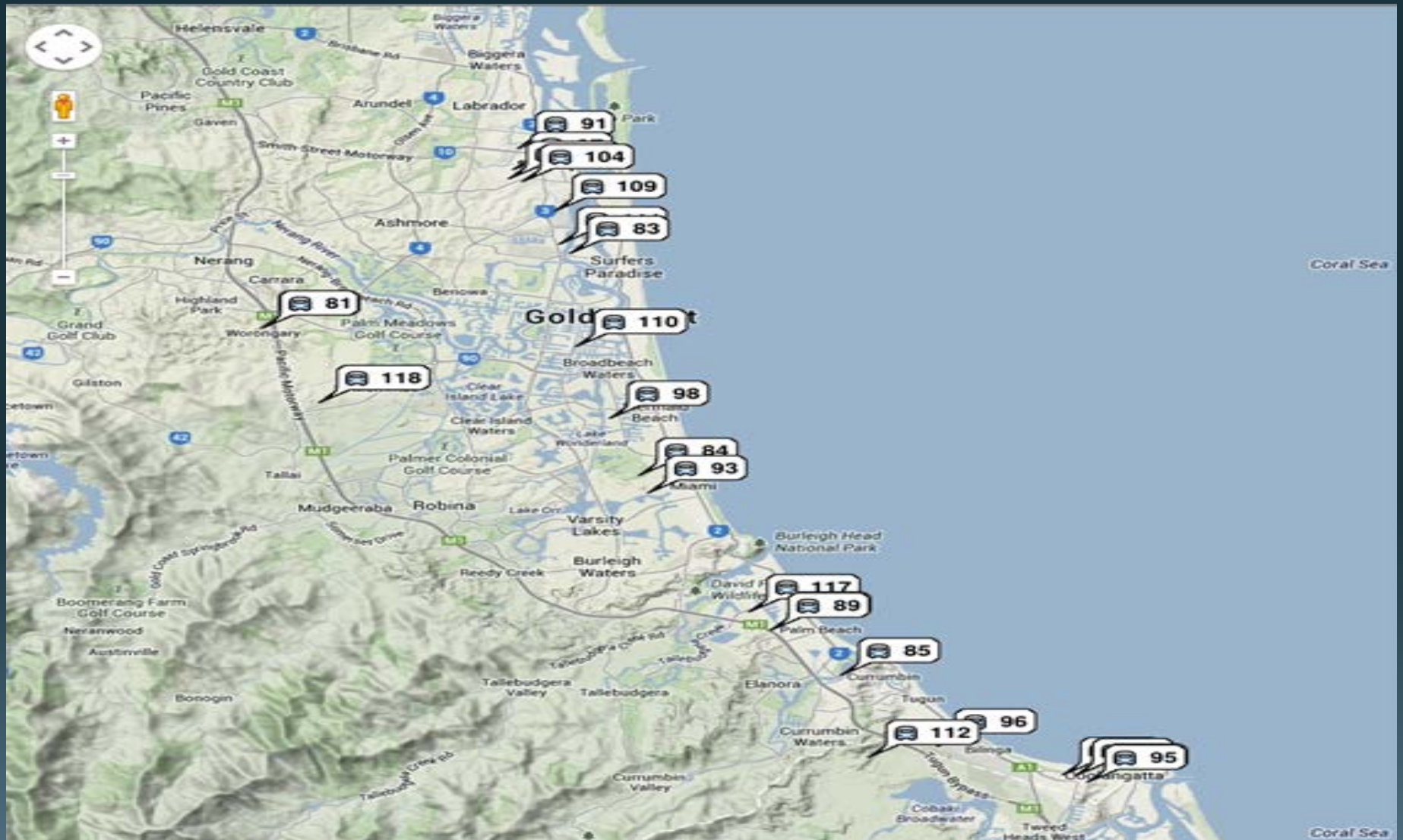


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Total Incidents: 63. Total Trips: 34

Physical		Verbal		Property		Incivility		Road Rage		Participants		Response	
Spat at	0	Name calling	1	Fare evasion	15	Loud language	5	Yelling	0	Driver-pax	13	Talk to pax seated	9
Kicked	0	Accusing	0	Theft	0	Unruly	3	Gestures	0	Driver-motorist	1	Talk to pax standing	1
Slapped	0	Arguing	3	Missile bus	0	Drunk drugged	4	Horn	1	Pax-pax	2	Approached pax	0
Punched	0	Threatening	0	Missile bus damage	0	Antagonistic	0	Damage to bus	0	Pax-general	2	Physically intervened	0
Stabbed	0			Hit bus	0	Hate racial	1	Disrupt service	0			Called ops	0
Robbed	0			Hit bus damage	0							Security attended	0
Missile	0			Internal damage	0							Trip terminated	1
Biological	0			Graffiti vandalism	0								

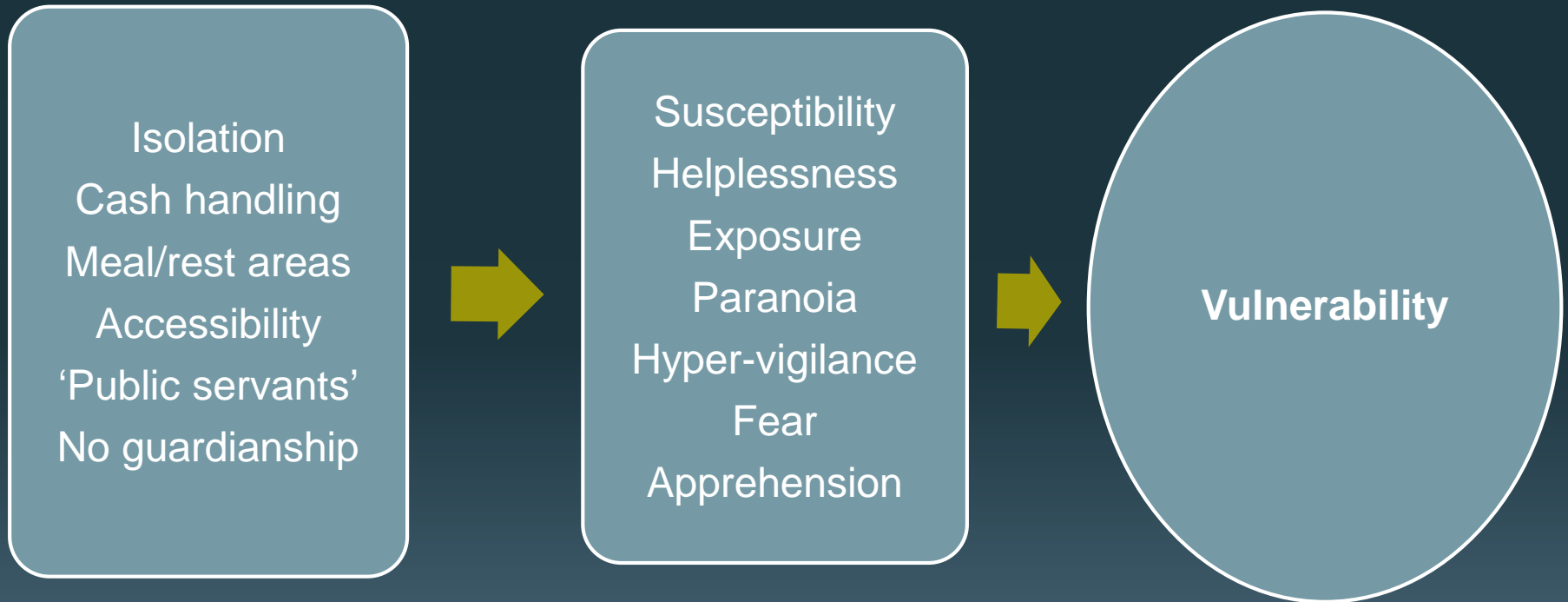
PATTERNS OF ABUSE



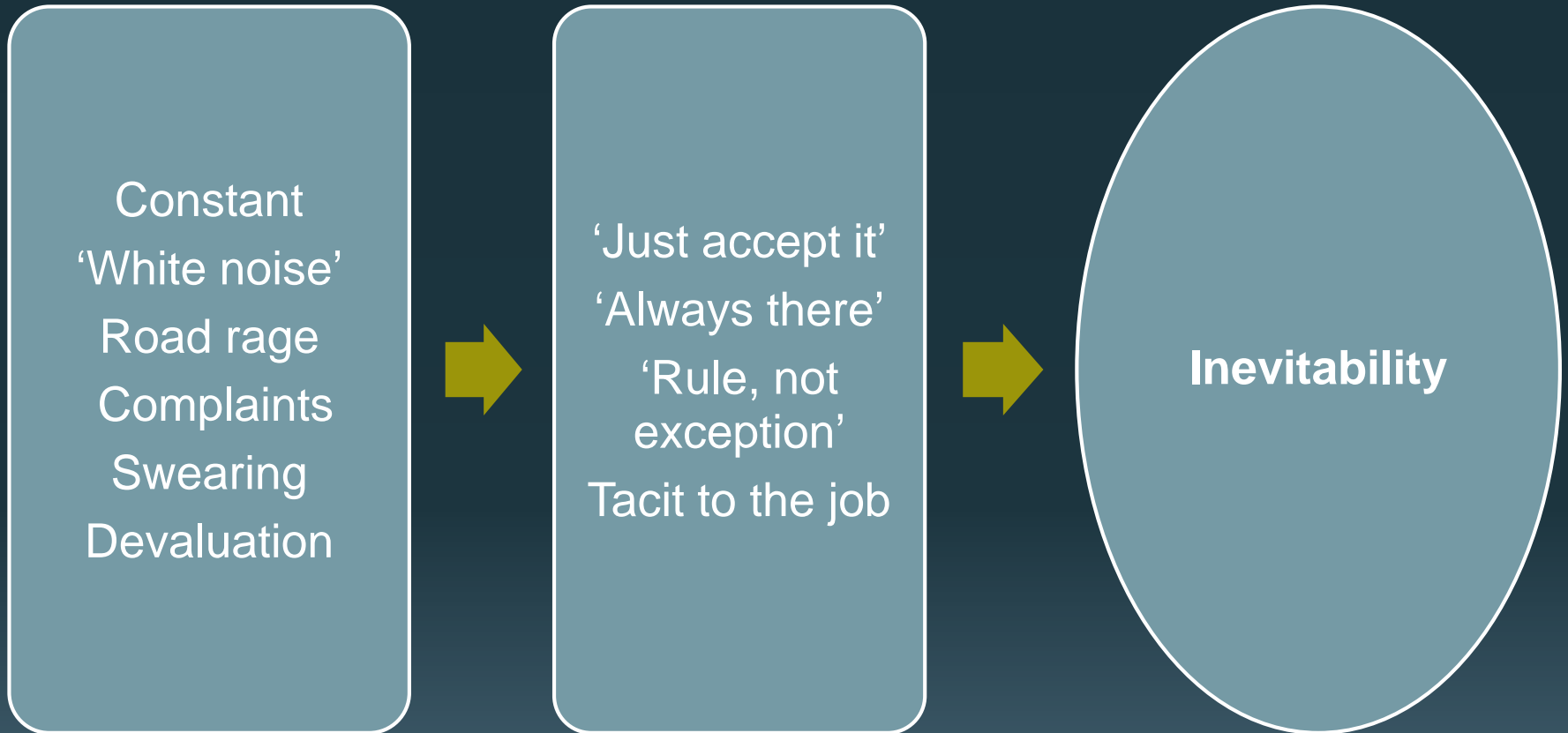
BUS DRIVER ROLE



THEME 1: VULNERABILITY



THEME 2: INEVITABILITY



THEME 3: VOLATILITY

Drunk/drug-
affected
passengers
Highly charged
environment
Driver
frustrations



Unpredictability -
'people turn on
you'
Mobile
environment
Escalation –
'happens from
nothing'



Volatility

THEME 4: INCONGRUITY

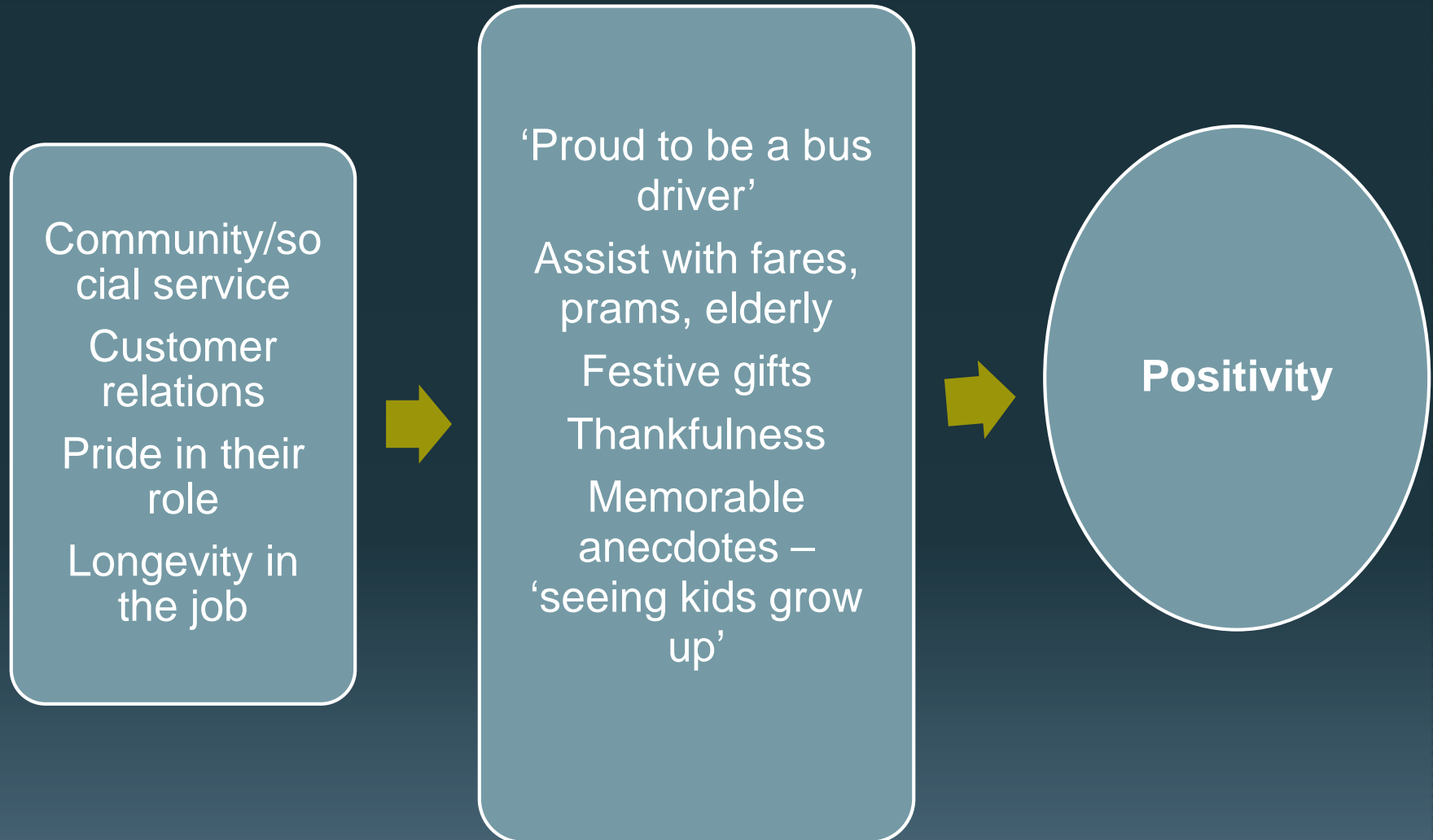


'Other drivers had
bad attitudes'
'Bring it on
themselves'
'Sure, I've had a
couple of incidents'
Minimisation
Denial



Incongruity

THEME 5: POSITIVITY



EXAMPLES OF ABUSE

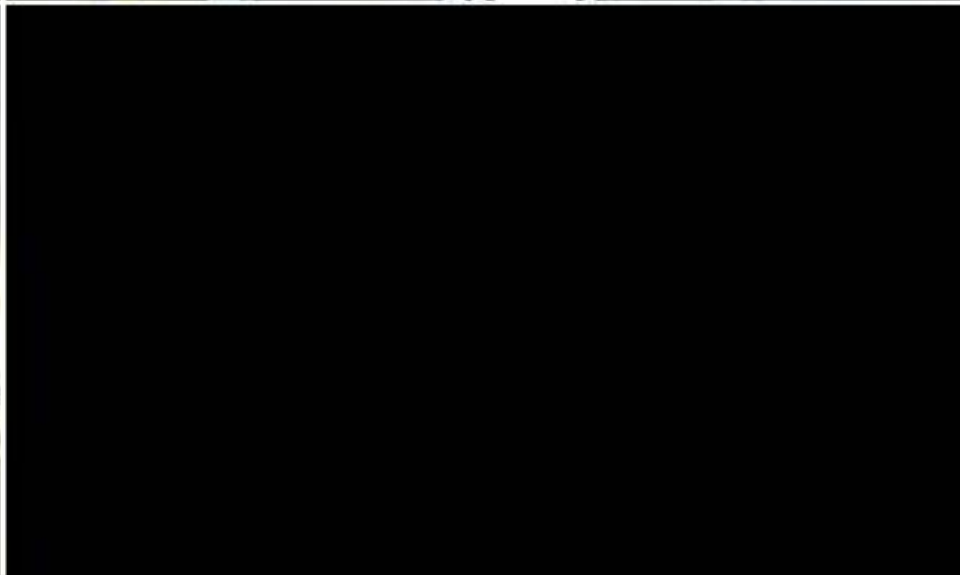
- Provided with CCTV footage and analysis of specific incidents is ongoing
- Selection of four incidents here that highlight some key aspects of our findings, short excerpts only:
 1. Young people, especially in large groups, are seen as being of most concern
 2. Driver attempts to enforce policy or challenge can be a precipitating factor
 3. Assault comes in many forms – mostly verbal but occasional physical assault
 4. Responsibility for the safety of other passengers

Large group of youth



23/11/12 20:05:20

Disorder challenged



29/03/14 11:19:20

Spitting assault



19/10/12 15:34:28

Potential to involve others



16/11/13 19:39:18



TYPES OF ABUSE

TYPE	ACTION
Physical abuse	stabbed, punched, kicked, spat at, robbed, missiles thrown, sprayed with liquids
Verbal abuse	name calling, accusing/blaming, arguing, threatening
Incivility	drunkenness, boisterousness, fare evasion, unauthorised passenger entry
Road rage	minor (name calling, gestures) to serious (assault, attack bus, threats)
Property damage	missiles (rocks/eggs), passengers hitting/kicking bus with skateboards/feet, damage to bus parts

MAIN FINDINGS

- Five types of aggression: physical assault, verbal abuse, incivility, road rage and property damage that impact on drivers
- Fare evasion is the most common form of abuse
- Physical aggression is preceded by verbal abuse
- Most drivers have experienced abuse in last twelve months
- Incidents appear to have declined from 2010 to 2013
- Reportability is low (less than one-third of missiles) and may be declining
- Severity of events may be escalating (qualitative data)
- Fare evasion and late-running precipitate aggressive events
- Early morning, late afternoon and for the night-time economy in central Gold Coast generally with young people involved are the main features

CONCLUSIONS

Five key areas on which our recommendations centred:

- **Civil society** – improving awareness of the important role that bus drivers play in community/society – ‘bus drivers make the world go around’
- **Free travel** – some evidence globally to underscore the benefit of eliminating all potential disputes around fares and ticketing
- **Reportability** – imperative to improve transit industry cultures around the importance of reporting all incidents and to ensure that there are easy and accessible procedures to encourage drivers to comply

...

- **Driver training** – important to continue with conflict resolution type programs but also to accentuate the customer service orientation that drivers take pride in
- **Crime reduction** – evaluation of specific initiatives to protect drivers (eg screens), or to improve bus design (emergency button), or to evaluate training courses



Reducing violence on buses

Researchers pilot Queensland study

[Read more](#)

THANK YOU

Comments and
questions please!

